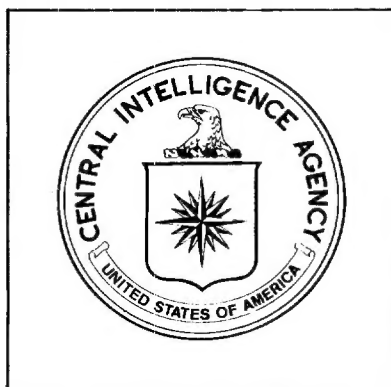


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STAFF NOTES:

**Middle East
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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Somalia

Power Struggle Underway

A power struggle is apparently going on within the Somali hierarchy.

According to the US embassy in Mogadiscio, reports are circulating in the capital that President Siad has confined his longtime rival, Defense Minister Samantar, to a military hospital and has arrested a number of the more radical members of the government for plotting to oust him. Samantar and the others were said to be responsible for the distribution in recent weeks of tracts demanding that Siad step down because of irregularities in the distribution of aid to Somali drought victims. There are also reports that some members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, including Vice President Culmie, are "ill and resting at home."

Meanwhile, anti-Siad wall slogans and propaganda tracts continue to appear in Mogadiscio; some of the tracts have been distributed in the army compound where Siad resides. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] claim that the kidnaping of French Ambassador Guery on March 23 was engineered by Siad's opponents to embarrass him by creating the impression he has little control over domestic security.

Recent reporting suggests that Siad has recently sought--with some success--to consolidate power in his own hands. Some of the president's associates in the council and government may have felt that there would be a permanent diminution of their own roles unless they acted either to remove or block him.

Siad could be faced with a dilemma in deciding what further actions to take against Samantar and the other alleged plotters. Although Samantar has no strong tribal base, he is said to have substantial support in the Somali military.

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Samantar and some of the other plotters also have strong links to the Soviet embassy, but it is not clear what role if any the Soviets played in the anti-Siad activity. The US embassy speculates that the plotters acted on their own initiative and were relying on Soviet support if they succeeded, or protection if they failed.

Although the Soviets were probably in contact with the plotters, Moscow would have had little reason to cause trouble for Siad. In the last few years, the Somali President has granted the Soviets military facilities at the port of Berbera, and last summer the two sides signed a formal treaty of friendship.

In any event, the Samantar affair is likely to be a setback to Soviet interests in Somalia. Siad probably will not take any strong action against the Soviets that could end their military assistance, but the affair will reinforce widespread Somali suspicions of Soviet intentions in the country. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Angola

Neto Looks For Help From Lisbon

Agostinho Neto, the leftist president of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, one of the three liberation groups that share power with the Portuguese in the transitional government, recently sent his military commander to Lisbon to seek moral and material support from the Armed Forces Movement. Neto apparently had been encouraged by leftist gains in Portugal since the abortive coup there earlier this month.

Neto believes the Armed Forces Movement, the guiding force in Portuguese politics since the Lisbon coup last April, would like to see the Popular Movement hold the dominant political position in Angola. He especially wants Portuguese support in the event civil war breaks out between his group and the militarily superior National Front for the Liberation of Angola, a possibility brought closer by clashes in Luanda this week between the two groups. Neto also hopes that any Portuguese support will help him exert greater discipline over the Popular Movement, which has been plagued by severe factionalism for the past several years.

The Portuguese military commander in Angola believes that Lisbon can do little for Neto. He believes also that most Angolans want the territory to have as few links with Portugal as possible and that Neto would seriously undermine his political campaign by seeking to enlist Portuguese support. Moreover, even if the Armed Forces Movement wanted to help Neto, Portuguese troops stationed in the territory are anxious to return home and might not respond to orders that embroiled them in supporting any of the liberation groups or in putting down all-out civil war in Angola.

In the fighting this week in Luanda, there is no evidence to suggest that the Portuguese authorities have sided with either liberation group. The actions of the Portuguese thus far have been aimed solely at trying to quell the violence and restoring calm. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Pakistan

Bhutto Talks Tough on External Threats

Prime Minister Bhutto's vehement attack against India and Afghanistan on March 21 is the strongest denunciation of those countries in recent weeks. The diatribe came in a speech delivered in Lyallpur, the latest stop on the prime minister's intermittent grand tour of the Punjab that began last November. Bhutto's remarks echoed old themes and seemed clearly designed to build up domestic support, despite his lingering obsession with foreign threats. The prime minister probably viewed a speech to the [REDACTED] 25X6 Punjabis--Pakistan's most receptive audience to emotional appeals--as a good way to shore up his tour that is being increasingly termed lackluster.

Bhutto lashed out at New Delhi and Kabul for supporting Pakistani separatists. He cited Afghanistan President Daud's recent trip to India and Bangladesh as evidence of conspiracies being hatched against Pakistan. He also accused Afghanistan of abetting those who assassinated Northwest Frontier Province Home Minister Sherpao last February. The Prime Minister told the cheering crowd that Pakistan would counter any aggression by its "enemies" with a fight to the last man.

Despite Bhutto's rhetoric, the process of reconciliation between Islamabad and New Delhi is continuing. Indian Prime Minister Gandhi's public reaction was notably mild. She took the "we told you so" line, linking Bhutto's tough remarks to the recent US policy decision that will permit arms sales to Pakistan. Indeed, a Pakistani shipping delegation left for New Delhi on March 25, and negotiations aimed at restoring civil aviation links are expected to begin soon.

Pakistan's already poor relations with Afghanistan also seem to have been unaffected by the speech. Despite mutual distrust and lingering fears in both Kabul and Islamabad, neither side will let the situation deteriorate past verbal attacks. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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